

Life Group Guide

“Forgiveness”

March 12-18, 2017

Prep:

Please make sure to review the material in the guide so you are prepared for the conversation in your Life Group.

Welcome:

Take a few minutes to reconnect with your group.

Video:

Show the video. It is about 3 minutes long. It will set up the conversation on servanthood

Scripture: 1 Samuel 24:1-22, Psalm 7:1-17

David Spares Saul's Life

24 [a]After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, “David is in the Desert of En Gedi.” **2** So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats.

3 He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. **4** The men said, “This is the day the Lord spoke of when he said[b] to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’” Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe.

5 Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. **6** He said to his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord’s anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord.” **7** With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.

8 Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, “My lord the king!” When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. **9** He said to Saul, “Why do you listen when men say, ‘David is bent on harming you’? **10** This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord’s anointed.’ **11** See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. **12** May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have

done to me, but my hand will not touch you. **13** As the old saying goes, ‘From evildoers come evil deeds,’ so my hand will not touch you.

14 “Against whom has the king of Israel come out? Who are you pursuing? A dead dog? A flea? **15** May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand.”

16 When David finished saying this, Saul asked, “Is that your voice, David my son?” And he wept aloud. **17** “You are more righteous than I,” he said. “You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly. **18** You have just now told me about the good you did to me; the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me. **19** When a man finds his enemy, does he let him get away unharmed? May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today. **20** I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. **21** Now swear to me by the Lord that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father’s family.”

22 So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

Psalm 7^[a]

1

Lord my God, I take refuge in you;
save and deliver me from all who pursue me,

2

or they will tear me apart like a lion
and rip me to pieces with no one to rescue me.

3

Lord my God, if I have done this
and there is guilt on my hands—

4

if I have repaid my ally with evil
or without cause have robbed my foe—

5

then let my enemy pursue and overtake me;
let him trample my life to the ground
and make me sleep in the dust.^[c]

6

Arise, Lord, in your anger;
rise up against the rage of my enemies.
Awake, my God; decree justice.

7

Let the assembled peoples gather around you,
while you sit enthroned over them on high.

8

Let the Lord judge the peoples.
Vindicate me, Lord, according to my righteousness,
according to my integrity, O Most High.

9

Bring to an end the violence of the wicked
and make the righteous secure—
you, the righteous God
who probes minds and hearts.

10

My shield[d] is God Most High,
who saves the upright in heart.

11

God is a righteous judge,
a God who displays his wrath every day.

12

If he does not relent,
he[e] will sharpen his sword;
he will bend and string his bow.

13

He has prepared his deadly weapons;
he makes ready his flaming arrows.

14

Whoever is pregnant with evil
conceives trouble and gives birth to disillusionment.

15

Whoever digs a hole and scoops it out
falls into the pit they have made.

16

The trouble they cause recoils on them;
their violence comes down on their own heads.

17

I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness;
I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High.

Reflection/Vision Statement Time

- We recommend taking about 4-5 minutes for people to reflect after the passage. But before you do, say something like:
 - “I encourage you to first take a couple minutes to reflect on this passage and the video, come up with any questions, connections, or what the passages says to you tonight.” Ask people to think about how these passages models godly and ungodly interaction with *forgiveness*. How does what David wrote in Psalm 7 relate to what he was experiencing in the other passage?

Questions for Discussion:

(Choose your favorites ahead of time that you think will benefit your group the most)

Context: At one point, Saul had been chosen to lead the nation of Israel as its king. However, as we read a few weeks back, Saul *lost* the favor of God after a military victory in which he refused to give the Lord credit. God called the prophet Samuel to seek out a new king, and eventually directed him to David. Samuel anoints David while Saul is still in power. David eventually kills the giant Goliath (who had been oppressing the people of Israel) and from that point on he and Saul are in constant tension. Saul feels *threatened, insulted, and jealous* of the influence that David has simply by being who he is. Eventually, this tension becomes too much for Saul and he turns *violent*. He begins to hunt David and his supporters down and attempt to kill them. David spends years on the run (when he likely wrote Psalm 7), and eventually finds himself at rock bottom, hiding in the back of a cave, praying for deliverance and redemption from the Lord

Question: What connections do you see between Psalm 7 (which David authored) and what he may have been experiencing being on the run from Saul?

Question: How do you think the mindset that David expresses in Psalm 7 shows up in his actions in 1 Samuel 24? Do you think these are positive or negative?

Question: Have you ever been wrongly accused of something? **Without describing the people or circumstances**, how did that make you feel? What specific phrases in Psalm 7 can you connect with that experience?

Observation: As he is running from Saul, David is experiencing the full gamut of emotions: depression, anger, fear, and loss. Yet, he is able to spare Saul and forgive him when they finally come face to face. In Psalm 7, we see that David doesn't suppress the strong *negative* emotions that he fosters toward Saul (v.6, 16), but neither does he let them dictate his actions in the confrontation. Instead, David processes these emotions in full force in the *presence* of God. This was a **necessary** thing in order for David to respond with the integrity he did.

Question: Why do you think processing his anger and hurt with God *before* the confrontation helped David? Have you ever done this, and how has it affected your ability to release forgiveness?

Question: Even though he didn't commit an act of violence against Saul in the cave, David did sneak up behind Saul and cut off a strip of his robe. David almost instantly regrets this- Why?

Observation: Forgiveness can't be a trophy that we show off to display how good we are. We *could* have crushed someone, but we *didn't*. When we hold our act of forgiveness as a trophy, we are using it to medicate the hurt that we received. The purpose of forgiveness is actually not to make us *feel* better in an instant- it is to *heal*.

Observation: When David is in the cave with Saul, his closest friends are encouraging him to kill Saul, even going so far as to present it as an opportunity from God. David, however, is able to tell the difference between the *easy* solution and the way of forgiveness. He gains this perspective from the time he spent processing his hurt with God.

Question: When is a time that you could have resolved a conflict more easily, but you invested extra time and effort to see it through. Why did you do that? How did God guide you and help you through that process?

Observation: When David finally confronts Saul, he tells him that he could have killed him, but he chose not to. He also clearly claims the injustices that Saul has subjected him to. David is doing two things: First, he is letting Saul know that he *chose* not to hurt him even when he could have. He is letting Saul know that he still loves him. Second, he is confronting a pattern that has to *change*.

Question: What role do you think correction plays in the process of forgiveness? How have you seen this work well in your life? What should our forgiveness look like when the correction we give is not received?

Observation: Saul is *moved* and *convicted* in the moment both by David's mercy toward him, but also the exposure of his own wrongs. He even asks David for additional mercy in sparing his future generations. Saul got so close to getting it right, but ultimately his jealousy and fear won out- he began to persecute and hunt David again after a short time.

Observation: Most often we see ourselves as the David in this story. We are hyper-aware of how we have been wronged. But not so aware of how we have wronged others. Sometimes we play the role of Saul, and we need to be forgiven.

Question: What can we learn from this passage about how to be a good *receiver* of forgiveness?

Question: Where are you personally in the spectrum of this story? Are you-

- Needing to process your hurt with the Lord (Psalm 7)
- Needing to confront and name a hurtful behavior for forgiveness to happen?
- Needing to ask for mercy and forgiveness from someone you have wronged?

Prayer:

(LIFE GROUP LEADERS): Pray for those who are struggling to forgive, and for those who feel like they need forgiveness. Invite the love of God to come into the room and overpower fear, mistrust, and pride as he heals hearts and relationships.